



Title:	SAMPLING EQUIPMENT DECONTAMINATION
Category:	ENV 3.15
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STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

SAMPLING EQUIPMENT DECONTAMINATION

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1. Scope and Application

The purpose of this procedure is to provide a description of methods for preventing or reducing cross-contamination and general guidelines for designing and selecting decontamination procedures for use at potential hazardous waste sites. The decontamination procedures chosen will prevent introduction and cross-contamination of suspected contaminants in environmental samples, and will protect the health and safety of site personnel.

2. Method Summary

Removing or neutralizing contaminants that have accumulated on personnel and equipment ensures protection of personnel from permeating substances, reduces/eliminates transfer of contaminants to clean areas, prevents the mixing of incompatible substances, and minimizes the likelihood of sample contamination.

Cross-contamination can be removed by physical decontamination procedures. The abrasive and non-abrasive methods include the use of brushes, high pressure water, air and wet blasting, and high pressure Freon cleaning. These methods should be followed by a wash/rinse process using appropriate cleaning solutions. A general protocol for cleaning with solutions is as follows:

1. Physical removal.
2. Non-phosphate detergent plus tap water.
3. Tap water.
4. 10% nitric acid.
5. Distilled/deionized water rinse.
6. Solvent rinse.
7. Total air dry.
8. Triple rinse with distilled/deionized water.

This procedure can be expanded to include additional or alternate solvent rinses that will remove specified target compounds if required by site-specific work plans (WP) or as directed by a particular client.

3. Interferences

The use of distilled/deionized water commonly available from commercial vendors may be acceptable for decontamination of sampling equipment provided that it has been verified by laboratory analysis to be analyte-free distilled/deionized water. Distilled water available from local grocery stores and pharmacies is generally not acceptable for final decontamination rinses. Contaminant-free deionized water is available from commercial vendors and may be shipped directly to the site or your hotel.



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The use of an untreated potable water supply is not an acceptable substitute for tap water. Tap water may be used from any municipal water treatment system.

4. Equipment/Apparatus

The following are standard materials and equipment used as a part of the decontamination process:

- Appropriate protective clothing;
- Air purifying respirator (APR);
- Field log book;
- Non-phosphate detergent;
- Selected high purity, contaminant-free solvents;
- Long-handled brushes;
- Drop cloths (plastic sheeting);
- Trash containers;
- Paper towels;
- Galvanized tubs or equivalent (e.g., baby pools);
- Tap water;
- Contaminant-free distilled/deionized water;
- Metal/plastic container for storage and disposal of contaminated wash solutions;
- Pressurized sprayers, H₂O;
- Pressurized sprayers, solvents;
- Trash bags;
- Aluminum foil;
- Sample containers;



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- Safety glasses or splash shield; and
- Emergency eyewash bottle.

5. Reagents

There are no reagents used in this procedure aside from decontamination solutions used for the equipment. The type of decontamination solution to be used shall depend upon the type and degree of contamination present and as specified in the project/site-specific Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP).

In general, the following solvents are utilized for decontamination purposes:

- 10% nitric acid wash (reagent grade nitric acid diluted with deionized/distilled water – 1 part acid to 10 parts water)^a;
- Acetone (pesticide grade)^b ;
- Hexane (pesticide grade)^b;
- Methanol; and
- Methylene chloride^b.

^a Only if sample is to be analyzed for trace metals.

^b Only if sample is to be analyzed for organics requiring specific or specialized decontamination procedures. These solvents must be kept away from samples in order to avoid contamination by decon solvents.

6. Procedures

Decontamination is the process of removing or neutralizing contaminants that have accumulated on both personnel and equipment. Specific procedures in each case are designed accordingly and may be identified in either the Health and Safety Plan (HSP), WP, QAPP, or all three.

As part of the HSP, a personnel decontamination plan should be developed and set up before any personnel or equipment enters the areas of potential contamination. Decontamination procedures for equipment will be specified in the WP and the associated QAPP. These plans should include:

- Number and layout of decontamination stations;
- Decontamination equipment needed (see Section 4);



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- Appropriate decontamination methods;
- Procedures to prevent contamination of clean areas;
- Methods and procedures to minimize worker contact with contaminants during removal of protective clothing;
- Methods and procedures to prevent cross-contamination of samples and maintain sample integrity and sample custody; and
- Methods for disposal of contaminated clothing, equipment, and solutions.

Revisions to these plans may be necessary for health and safety when the types of protective clothing, site conditions, or on-site hazards are reassessed based on new information.

Prevention of Contamination

Several procedures can be established to minimize contact with waste and the potential for contamination. For example:

- Employing work practices that minimize contact with hazardous substances (e.g., avoid areas of obvious contamination, avoid touching potentially hazardous substances);
- Use of remote sampling, handling, and container-opening techniques;
- Covering monitoring and sampling equipment with plastic or other protective material;
- Use of disposable outer garments and disposable sampling equipment with proper containment of these disposable items;
- Use of disposable towels to clean the outer surfaces of sample bottles before and after sample collection; and
- Encasing the source of contaminants with plastic sheeting or overpacks.

Proper procedures for dressing prior to entrance into contaminated areas will minimize the potential for contaminants to bypass the protective clothing. Generally, all fasteners (zippers, buttons, snaps, etc.) should be used, gloves and boots tucked under or over sleeves and pant legs, and all junctures taped (see the Health and Safety Plan for these procedures).



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Decontamination Methods

All personnel, samples, and equipment leaving the contaminated area of a site must be decontaminated to remove any chemicals or infectious organisms that may have adhered to them. Various decontamination methods will either physically remove, inactivate by chemical detoxification/disinfection/sterilization, or remove contaminants by both physical and chemical means.

In many cases, gross contamination can be removed by physical means. The physical decontamination techniques can be grouped into two categories: abrasive methods and non-abrasive methods.

6.1 Abrasive Cleaning Methods

Abrasive cleaning methods work by rubbing and wearing away the top layer of the surface containing the contaminant. The following reviews the available abrasive methods.

Mechanical

Mechanical methods include using brushes with metal, nylon, or natural bristles. The amount and type of contaminants removed will vary with the hardness of bristles, length of time brushing, and degree of brush contact. Material may also be removed by using appropriate tools to scrape, pry, or otherwise remove adhered materials.

Air Blasting

Air blasting equipment uses compressed air to force abrasive material through a nozzle at high velocities. The distance between nozzle and surface cleaned, air pressure, and time of air blasting dictate cleaning efficiency. The method's disadvantages are its inability to control the exact amount of material removed and its large amount of waste generated.

Wet Blasting

Wet blast cleaning involves the use of a suspended fine abrasive. The abrasive/water mixture is delivered by compressed air to the contaminated area. By using very fine abrasives, the amount of materials removed can be carefully controlled.

6.2 Non-abrasive Cleaning Methods

Non-abrasive cleaning methods work by either dissolution or by forcing the contaminant off a surface with pressure. In general, less of the equipment surface is removed using non-abrasive methods.



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High-Pressure Water

This method consists of a high-pressure pump, an operator controlled directional nozzle, and high-pressure hose. Operating pressure usually ranges from 340 to 680 psi, which relates to flow rates of 20 to 140 lpm.

Steam Cleaning

This method uses water delivered at high pressure and high temperature in order to remove accumulated solids and/or oils.

Ultra-High-Pressure Water

This system produces a water jet from 1,000 to 4,000 atm. This ultra-high-pressure spray can remove tightly-adhered surface films. The water velocity ranges from 500 m/sec. (1,000 atm) to 900 m/sec. (4,000 atm). Additives can be used to enhance the cleaning action, if approved by the QAPP for the project.

High-Pressure Freon Cleaning

Freon cleaning is a very effective method for cleaning cloth, rubber, plastic, and external/internal metal surfaces. Freon 113 (trichlorotrifluoroethane) is dense, chemically stable, relatively non-toxic, and leaves no residue. The vapor is easily removed from the air by activated charcoal. A high pressure (1,000 atm) jet of liquid Freon 113 is directed onto the surface to be cleaned. The Freon can be collected in a sump, filtered, and reused.

Physical removal of gross contamination should be followed by a wash/rinse process using cleaning solutions. One or more of the following methods utilize cleaning solutions.

Dissolving

Removal of surface contaminants can be accomplished by chemically dissolving them, although the solvent must be compatible with the equipment and protective clothing. Organic solvents include alcohols, ethers, ketones, aromatics, straight-chain alkanes, and common petroleum products. Halogenated solvents are generally incompatible with protective clothing and are toxic. Table 1 provides a general guide to the solubility of contaminant categories in four types of solvents.

Surfactants

Surfactants reduce adhesion forces between contaminants and the surface being cleaned and prevents reposition of the contaminants. Non-phosphate detergents dissolved in tap water is an acceptable surfactant solution.



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Rinsing

Contaminants are removed and rinsing through dilution, physical attraction, and solubilization.

Disinfection/Sterilization

Disinfectants are a practical means of inactivating infectious agents. Unfortunately, standard sterilization methods are impractical for large equipment and personal protective clothing.

6.3 Field Sampling Equipment Cleaning Procedures

The following steps for equipment cleaning should be followed for general field sampling activities.

1. Physical removal (abrasive or non-abrasive methods).
2. Scrub with non-phosphate detergent plus tap water.
3. Tap water rinse.
4. 10% nitric acid (required during sampling for inorganics only).
5. Distilled/deionized water rinse.
6. Solvent rinse (required during sampling for organics only).
7. Total air dry (required during sampling for organics only).
8. Triple rinse with distilled/deionized water.

Table 1 lists solvent rinses which may be required for elimination of particular chemicals. After each solvent rinse, the equipment should be air-dried and triple-rinsed with distilled/deionized water.

Solvent rinses are not necessarily required when organics are not a contaminant of concern. Similarly, an acid rinse is not necessarily required if analysis does not include inorganics.

NOTE: Reference the appropriate analytical procedure for specific decontamination solutions required for adequate removal of the contaminants of concern.

Sampling equipment that requires the use of plastic or teflon tubing should be disassembled, cleaned, and the tubing replaced with clean tubing, if necessary, before commencement of sampling or between sampling locations.



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Table 1 Decontamination Solvents

Solvent	Soluble Contaminants
Water	Low-chain compounds Salts Some organic acids and other polar compounds
Dilute Bases For example: ■ detergent ■ soap	Acidic compounds Phenol Thiols Some nitro and sulfonic compounds
Organic Solvents: For example: ■ alcohols (methanol) ■ ethers ■ ketones ■ aromatics ■ straight-chain alkanes (e.g., hexane) ■ common petroleum products (e.g., fuel oil, kerosene)	Nonpolar compounds (e.g., some organic compounds)

WARNING: Some organic solvents can permeate and/or degrade the protective clothing.

7. Quality Assurance/Quality Control

QA/QC samples are intended to provide information concerning possible cross-contamination during collection, handling, preparation, and packing of samples from field locations for subsequent review and interpretation. A field blank (rinsate blank) provides an additional check on possible sources of contamination from ambient air and from sampling instruments used to collect and transfer samples into sample containers.

A field blank (rinsate blank) consists of a sample of analyte-free water passed through/over a precleaned/decontaminated sampling device and placed in a clean area to attempt to simulate a worst-case condition regarding ambient air contributions to sample contamination.

Field blanks should be collected at a rate of one per day per sample matrix even if samples are not shipped that day. The field blanks should return to the lab with the trip blanks originally sent to the field and be packed with their associated matrix.

The field blank places a mechanism of control on equipment decontamination, sample handling, storage, and shipment procedures. It is also indicative of ambient conditions and/or equipment conditions that may affect the quality of the samples.

Holding times for field blanks analyzed by CLP methods begin when the blank is received in the laboratory (as documented on the chain of parameters and associated analytical methods).

Holding times for samples and blanks analyzed by SW-846 or the 600 and 500 series begins at the time of sample collection.



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8. Health and Safety

Decontamination can pose hazards under certain circumstances even though performed to protect health and safety. Hazardous substances may be incompatible with decontamination methods (i.e., the method may react with contaminants to produce heat, explosion, or toxic products). Decontamination methods may be incompatible with clothing or equipment (e.g., some solvents can permeate and/or degrade protective clothing). Also, a direct health hazard to workers can be posed from chemical decontamination solutions that may be hazardous if inhaled or may be flammable.

The decontamination solutions must be determined to be compatible before use. Any method that permeates, degrades, or damages personal protective equipment should not be used. If decontamination methods do pose a direct health hazard, measures should be taken to protect personnel or modified to eliminate the hazard.

All site-specific safety procedures should be followed for the cleaning operation. At a minimum, the following precautions should be taken:

1. Safety glasses with splash shields or goggles, neoprene gloves, and laboratory apron should be worn.
2. All solvent rinsing operations should be conducted under a fume hood or in open air.
3. No eating, smoking, drinking, chewing, or any hand-to-mouth contact is permitted.

9. References

Field Sampling Procedures Manual, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, 1988.

A Compendium of Superfund Field Operations Methods, EPA 540/p-87/001.

Engineering Support Branch Standard Operating Procedures and Quality Assurance Manual, USEPA Region IV, April 1, 1986.

Occupational Safety and Health Guidance Manual for Hazardous Waste Site Activities, NIOSH/OSHA/USCG/EPA, October 1985.